

5 FAH-1 H-520

PREPARING CONGRESSIONAL LETTERS

(TL:CH-2; 05-30-1998)

5 FAH-1 H-521 GENERAL

(TL:CH-2; 05-30-1998)

a. All Congressional correspondence from the Department is prepared for signature by the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs (H). The *Secretariat Handbook* contains guidelines for letters to be signed by the Secretary or other Seventh-Floor Principals or letters referred by the White House.

b. The office having primary interest in the subject matter prepares replies to Congressional inquiries.

c. Officers must draft Congressional letters promptly and address the immediate request. Replies should be expressed in direct and concise language.

d. In the Department, the Courier 10 pitch font (regular density) or Courier 12 point should be used for all Congressional letters. Posts follow instructions provided by the Executive Office or Information Program Center (IPC).

e. When selecting printer fonts or typing elements, be aware that spacing will vary with the point and pitch size. Point measures character height and pitch measures character width.

f. Preparers should use one and one-half inch margins (adjust for a well-balanced appearance) on the left and right and proceed as follows:

(1) Indent paragraphs five spaces. Indent closing and signature block 30 spaces from the left margin.

(2) Place the inside address at the bottom of the first page.

(3) In the Department, show drafting and clearing information only on a separate drafting page (see 5 FAH-1 H-526). This page is optional at post.

g. Officers must direct all questions regarding Congressional correspondence to H Correspondence Office (202) 647-1608. Discuss any problems or concerns with H before contacting a Congressional office.

5 FAH-1 H-522 STATIONERY

(TL:CH-2; 05-30-1998)

a. In the Department, Congressional letters are prepared using standard 8 1/2" by 11" regular Department of State blue seal letterhead stationery for the original letter and a photocopy of the original for the courtesy copy.

b. Posts use 8 1/2" by 11" post blue-seal letterhead stationery. An ambassador may also use white-seal letterhead.

c. For succeeding pages, plain white bond paper (8 1/2" by 11") must be used, not copier paper. Center page number approximately two lines below the top margin.

5 FAH-1 H-523 DATE

(TL:CH-2; 05-30-1998)

a. In the Department preparers must omit the date at time of preparation. The date will be added by A/RPS/IPS/IA/CC.

b. At posts preparers may include the date at time of preparation on all copies except the original and courtesy copies, unless otherwise instructed by drafting officer or Information Programs Center (IPC). The date is placed at least two lines below post letterhead (see 5 FAH-1 H-513 Exhibit H-513.2).

5 FAH-1 H-524 COPIES

(TL:CH-2; 05-30-1998)

a. Preparers should avoid making extra copies of Congressional correspondence. In the Department, be certain to prepare a Comeback Copy and label it in the upper right corner prior to forwarding the package for processing. See 5 FAH-1 H-528 for guidance on assembling the package.

b. The following copies should be prepared at post:

- (1) Original and courtesy copy for Member;
- (2) Official file copy;
- (3) Copy for Department if required;
- (4) Copy for IPC chron files;

(5) Copy for drafting office chron files; and

(6) Information copies as required.

5 FAH-1 H-525 STYLE AND CONTENT

(TL:CH-2; 05-30-1998)

Drafters of Congressional correspondence must follow guidelines listed below when drafting responses.

(1) Use the active voice and avoid long, complicated sentences. Be precise and avoid highly technical terms and Department of State jargon.

(2) Be courteous in explaining and supporting Department policy.

(3) Reflect that the Member is seriously interested in solving the constituent's problem.

(4) Provide unclassified responses before offering classified material, particularly when a constituent has written to a Member. Sometimes classifications are imposed because of source, form, etc. After simple deletions and or rephrasings, material can be made available.

(5) Make responses complete, answering all questions raised.

(6) When referencing newspaper articles referred for comment, use "recent newspaper article" rather than the columnist's name.

(7) Do not include the year when referencing the Member's request by date, unless it is a previous year.

5 FAH-1 H-525.1 Opening Sentence

(TL:CH-2; 05-30-1998)

a. If the incoming letter is addressed to the Secretary, the opening sentence must begin with "The Secretary has asked me to reply to (or to thank you for) your letter of (date) requesting (or commending)...."

b. At posts, if inquiry is addressed to the principal officer and is to be signed by a senior officer, it must read "Ambassador (name) has asked me to reply....," or "In the absence of Consul General (name), I am replying to your letter of (date)," etc.

c. Avoid implying that the letter is a routine request. Refer to the date of the Member's letter in the first paragraph (if undated, use "recent inquiry"). Include only the month and day, not year, when referencing the date. Select appropriate language from the following examples:

(1) When a constituent's letter is enclosed, use: "The Department has received your letter of (date), concerning Mr. (name) views about (subject)..."

(2) When a constituent's letter is not enclosed, use:

(a) "Thank you for your letter of (date), requesting (concerning) (commenting on) (subject)"

(b) "I am pleased to reply to your letter dated (date) in which you express concern about (subject) and appreciate your bringing it to my attention."

(c) When a letter expresses criticism or complaint, do not open with "Thank you." Use: "We have received your letter of (date), expressing concern about (subject)."

(d) For letters addressed to the White House and forwarded to the Department for reply, open with "The President (Vice President) has asked me to reply to your letter of (date), concerning (subject)."

5 FAH-1 H-525.2 Text

(TL:CH-2; 05-30-1998)

a. The drafter must begin the letter to acknowledge the Member's interest, whether or not the constituent's letter is sent to the Department. Drafters should also keep in mind that the reply may be read by a constituent, appear in the press, or be published in the Congressional Record.

b. Generally, the drafter should reply as though the constituent may not be knowledgeable on the subject and will depend on our reply to aid in understanding the Department's position. Explain Department policy in sufficient detail.

c. The preparer should begin the text two lines below the salutation.

5 FAH-1 H-525.3 Closing Paragraph

(TL:CH-2; 05-30-1998)

a. Drafters should use courteous closings consistent with the nature of the reply. Do not state that we were glad to help if we were not able to do so. The following closings are suggested:

(1) If providing information only—I hope this information will be helpful in your reply to (your constituent) or Mr./Ms._____. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of further assistance."

(2) If helped Member or constituent with solving a problem—I hope this will be helpful to you" (if Member) or "in replying to your constituent (Mr./Ms.____). Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of further assistance."

b. For negative replies use "I regret that the Department or Embassy (Consulate) is unable to respond more favorably;" or "I am sorry that I cannot give you a more encouraging reply."

5 FAH-1 H-525.4 Complimentary Closing

(TL:CH-2; 05-30-1998)

Drafters must use "Sincerely" as the complimentary closing. Place the closing two lines below the last line of text, indented 30 spaces from the left margin.

5 FAH-1 H-525.5 Signature

(TL:CH-2; 05-30-1998)

a. The Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs (H) signs letters to Members of Congress except as stated in 5 FAM.

b. Direct replies from posts are signed by the principal officer or a senior officer authorized by the principal officer.

c. Officers must refer any questions regarding signature to H.

d. The preparer must enter the signature block five lines below and aligned with the closing.

5 FAH-1 H-525.6 Enclosures

(TL:CH-2; 05-30-1998)

a. Drafters must return only constituent's original letter or other original documents (e.g., passport; birth certificate) to the Member of Congress. Return copies of letters or newspaper clippings, etc., only if requested. When in doubt, the drafter should consult H with questions about enclosures.

b. Posts receiving only copies of enclosures from the Department are not responsible for returning enclosures.

c. For interim replies the drafter holds the constituent's original letter for return with the final reply. The phrase "Correspondence returned" does not mean that the Member's letter is returned with the Department's reply; it means the constituent's letter is returned.

d. When a Member's letter is referred to a post for reply, the drafter at post must return the original constituent letter and enclosure(s) to the Department along with the Department's interim reply.

e. The preparer numbers and describes enclosure(s) flush with the left margin, directly below the word "Enclosure(s):". Begin any carryover line(s) directly below the first word in the description.

Example:

Enclosures:

1. Departmental Employment Foreign
Service Officer Kit
2. List of Terms

5 FAH-1 H-526 DRAFTING AND CLEARING INFORMATION

5 FAH-1 H-526.1 Department

(TL:CH-2; 05-30-1998)

Preparers must create a separate drafting page on bond paper for recording drafting and clearing information. This page will also include the H Tasking Slip control number (generated by A/RPS/IPS/PSD) and any word processing document number (see 5 FAH-1 H-526 Exhibit H-526.1). Note: If the Congressional letter was received directly, the control number will appear on the comeback copy when it is returned to the action office.

5 FAH-1 H-526.2 Post

(TL:CH-2; 05-30-1998)

a. Drafters at posts may show drafting and clearing information on file copies or on a separate drafting page (see 5 FAH-1 H-526 Exhibit H-526.1). If using a drafting page, be sure to include it with all file copies.

b. Preparers should place the word "Clearances" near the center of the page opposite drafting information, indicate method of clearance (substance, draft, phone) in parenthesis after the name of clearing officer if they do not clear the document in person. The drafting officer places initials by the name of clearing officer.

5 FAH-1 H-527 ENVELOPE

(TL:CH-2; 05-30-1998)

a. See 5 FAH-1 H-527 Exhibit H-527 for sample envelopes prepared in the Department and posts. Envelopes large enough for the letter and enclosures should be prepared along with envelopes as required for information addresses outside the Department or post.

b. Preparers must follow Member's instructions and address envelopes to the address designated in the Member's letter.

c. At post, if the reply is to be transmitted to Washington via the diplomatic pouch, envelope should be marked "UNCLASSIFIED" on both sides. Put a letter sent by U.S. military postal facilities or open air mail (when approved by the principal officer) in a plain envelope marked "AIR MAIL."

5 FAH-1 H-528 ASSEMBLY AND DISPATCH

(TL:CH-2; 05-30-1998)

a. In the Department the preparer must assemble the final Congressional package, obtain clearances, and forward it to H for final clearance and signature. Use photocopies for all copies made in the Department. Assemble packages as follows:

- (1) Comeback copy
- (2) Drafting page
- (3) H Tasking Slip
- (4) Member's incoming letter
- (5) Original with completed envelope
- (6) Constituent correspondence

Do not use staples. After H signs, the package is sent to A/RPS/IS/IA/CC for dating, dispatching, and distribution of copies.

b. At post, Congressional documents and interim replies are assembled according to instructions provided by the individual posts. Photocopies may be used. After signature packages are forwarded to the IPC for dispatch and distribution of copies.

5 FAH-1 H-529 UNASSIGNED

5 FAH-1 H-526 Exhibit H-526.1
DRAFTING PAGE—CONGRESSIONALS

(TL:CH-2; 05-30-1998)

Drafted:

A/EX:JDoe:ja
3/1/97 X70441
Control No. P000000

Cleared:

IRM/OPS:MFuller
IRM/ITI/SI:BJDoe
IRM/OPS/MSO:PDHarr
H:_____

5 FAH-1 H-527 Exhibit H-527 ENVELOPES FOR MAILING CONGRESSIONALS—DEPARTMENT

(TL:CH-2; 05-30-1998)

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE, U. S. A.
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20520
OFFICIAL BUSINESS
PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE, \$300

Honorable John A. Doe
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20515

Include zip code.

93

DEPARTMENT OF STATE, U. S. A.
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20520
OFFICIAL BUSINESS
PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE, \$300

Honorable Richard M. Doe
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

93

DEPARTMENT OF STATE, U. S. A.
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20520
OFFICIAL BUSINESS
PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE, \$300

Honorable John A. Doe
Chairman, Committee on Interstate
and Foreign Commerce
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Attention: Mr. Frank Brown

Use "Attention" line, if necessary, only on the envelope.

Use block style. Indent any carryover line 2 spaces.

Continuation – 5 FAH-1 H-527 Exhibit H-527

<p>THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA</p> <p>OFFICIAL BUSINESS</p> <p>American Embassy FPO New York 09510</p> <p>↑</p> <p>Do not include geographic address of post when APO or FPO address is used.</p>	<p>AIR MAIL</p> <p>Honorable John A. Doe United States Senate Washington, DC 20510</p>
<p>THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA</p> <p>OFFICIAL BUSINESS</p> <p>American Embassy London, England</p> <p>↑</p> <p>Proper return address for letter sent via international mail.</p>	<p>AIR MAIL</p> <p>Honorable John A. Doe United States Senate Washington, D.C. 20510</p>
<p>THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA</p> <p>OFFICIAL BUSINESS</p> <p>American Consulate General Hong Kong, B. C. C.</p> <p>UNCLASSIFIED</p> <p>↑</p> <p>Mark both sides of envelope when going by pouch.</p>	<p>Honorable John A. Doe House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515</p> <p>Letters in regular bond envelopes will be sent by air pouch without "Air Mail" marking.</p>

